

Request for Applications

Nourishing Communities: Nutrition Access, Education and Impact

INTRODUCTION

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation, and Blue Cross Complete of Michigan are pleased to announce this request for applications. The Nourishing Communities: Nutrition Access, Education and Impact grant opportunity reflects our shared commitment to advancing the health and well-being of communities across Michigan with the understanding that nutrition and health are closely connected.

Chronic conditions linked to poor nutrition — including diabetes, hypertension and obesity — represent a significant portion of healthcare costs. Healthcare expenses in Michigan from obesity alone are estimated to reach \$792 million annually. At the same time, food insecurity and lack of access to healthy options continue to challenge families statewide. According to the latest data available, approximately 1.5 million Michigan residents, including 400,000 children, struggled to get enough to eat.

We invite applications from Michigan-based nonprofit organizations for sustainable initiatives that improve access to nutritious food and strengthen nutrition knowledge. We know that having reliable access to nutritious food is essential to health, well-being and quality of life. It can help prevent chronic disease, strengthen communities and create opportunities for people to live healthier lives.

We welcome proposals that serve communities across Michigan, with particular interest in efforts that reflect the unique strengths, needs and culture of the communities they serve. We are especially interested in innovative approaches that not only improve access today, but also help create lasting, sustainable change for the future.

GUIDELINES

Funding will support initiatives that increase access to fresh, nutrient-rich food and beverages and strengthen nutrition knowledge for Michigan residents. Priority will be given to sustainable approaches that help make the healthy choice the easy choice for all community members. Examples that align with this funding opportunity include but are not limited to:

- Establishing or improving infrastructure for food distribution programs.
- Strengthening local food systems, supply chains and distribution networks to make nutritious food more available and accessible. Supporting systems, policies and programs that create equitable opportunities to grow, sell and distribute food for the

benefit of children and families (for example, neighborhood food hubs, local farmers markets, community garden infrastructure, local storage and transportation, local food policy).

- Establishing, expanding or enhancing community gardens or hoop houses to increase distribution through community-based sites, such as local food pantries focused on supporting children and families (for example, community action agencies, early childhood care and education providers, and schools).
- Expanding or enhancing programs that increase access to healthy food for older adults.
- Enhancing initiatives with nutrition education through evidence-based tools or curricula that promote healthy lifestyles and support chronic disease prevention or management.
- Expanding or enhancing food rescue and gleaning efforts in partnership with grocery stores, farms and restaurants to increase distribution through community-based sites, such as local food pantries.

FUNDING AVAILABLE

Through this funding opportunity, grants of up to \$50,000 will be awarded for initiatives implemented over a 12-month period. A total of \$375,000 is available to support eligible initiatives. Direct purchases of food or beverages are not allowed under this opportunity.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Applications will be reviewed based on the following criteria:

- A clearly demonstrated community need and a strong, well-defined plan to address food access, including a thoughtful approach to long-term sustainability.
- Specific, measurable goals and objectives, and an evaluation plan that demonstrates how the initiative's impact on the community will be assessed.
- A detailed project budget that includes clear line items and a strong budget justification aligned with the proposed initiative.
- Submission of a complete application with all required materials.

ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must meet all the following eligibility requirements:

- Michigan based organization serving Michigan residents.
- Recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) organization or a community-based nonprofit organization paired with a 501(c)(3) organization.

IMPORTANT DATES

- Completed applications are due Friday, August 14, 2026.
- Award notification will be made by Thursday, October 1, 2026.
- Program period begins November 1, 2026, and ends October 31, 2027.

HOW TO APPLY AND HELPFUL TIPS FOR THE ONLINE APPLICATION

- Access the online application through the Blue Cross grant management system: [Social Mission Grant Proposal](#).
- From the home page, click *New Application* in the upper-left corner and follow the prompts to begin.
- You can move through the application using the *Previous* and *Next* buttons at the bottom of each page or by selecting the blue navigation lines at the top of the page.
- We encourage applicants to preview all application sections in advance using the blue navigation lines at the top of each page. To make the process easier, consider drafting your responses in Microsoft Word first and then pasting them into the online application.
- The application includes an auto-save feature. Each time you move between tabs or pages, your responses are saved in your browser. You may close your browser and return later to continue your work, provided you use the same computer and the same browser each time. Please note that your application is not submitted to us until you complete and submit the form.
- If you would like to collaborate with another person on the application, click *Actions* in the upper-right corner of the screen. This will generate a link that you can copy and share by email. To avoid issues, the person not actively working in the application should close his or her browser tab while the other person is editing.
- If you have questions about the application content, such as the narrative or budget, email socialmission@bcbsm.com.
- If you have technical questions or issues related to the application or grant website, contact the Benevity Administrator at grants@benevity.com.
- We recommend adding grants@benevity.com to your safe senders list to ensure you receive all system-generated communications.
- Late or incomplete applications may not be considered for funding. A complete application includes responses to all required questions.